

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

INLINE POWER CONTROL

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SPECIFICATION

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

INLINE POWER CONTROL

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a network power system including power source equipment, at least one powered device, and transmission media. More specifically, the present invention relates to power source equipment including at least one physical layer having inline power control.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] In the field of networks, there are instances when it is desired or required that data terminal equipment (DTE) be able to draw power from the same generic cabling as that used for data transmission. DTE devices may include telephones, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP or IP or Ethernet) telephones, network access devices, computers, and the like. Such a power scheme is known as inline or phantom power or power via a media dependent interface (MDI). Various example power via MDI schemes exist. These include a proprietary scheme from Cisco Systems, Inc. (Cisco) and a standard scheme from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). The proprietary scheme from Cisco will be referred to as Cisco legacy power. The IEEE scheme is known as IEEE 802.3af standard power and will be referred to as IEEE standard power. Although these two inline power schemes have some aspects in common, they are not entirely compatible with one another.

[0003] Turning first to FIG. 1, a schematic diagram of a network power system 10 having power source equipment (PSE) 12, a plurality of powered devices (PD) 14A-N, and a plurality of corresponding transmission media 16A-N is shown. The plurality of transmission media 16A-N are connected to the corresponding power source equipment 12 and powered devices 14A-N through a power interface at each end of the transmission media. Each transmission media may contain a plurality of conductors. For example, the current Ethernet standard is a minimum of two twisted-pair cables for a total of four conductors. The length and routing of the transmission media will depend on the circumstances and the applicable communications protocol. The number and location of each of the plurality of powered devices 14A-N will depend on the circumstances. The power source equipment 12 may also be variously located based on the circumstances. The power source equipment 12 may be at one end of the network or it might be somewhere between the ends of the network. The multiple power interfaces of the power source equipment 12 are often referred to as ports. The number of ports will vary. Typically, one port is connected to one powered device. However, it is also possible that multiple powered devices might be connected together to one port or multiple ports might be connected to one powered device. The multiple transmission media are often referred to as links between the power source equipment and the various powered devices. Each link includes at least two data and power signal paths with one for transmitting and one for receiving. In order for the network power system 10 to operate correctly, the power source equipment 12 and the plurality of powered devices 14A-N must be compatible with one another.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0004] A physical layer for an inline power device of a network power system is disclosed. The network power system includes inline power devices such as power source equipment and a plurality of powered devices and further includes a plurality of corresponding transmission media. The plurality of transmission media are connected to the corresponding power source equipment and powered devices through a power interface at each end of the transmission media. The multiple power interfaces of the power source equipment are often referred to as ports. For each port of the power source equipment and the plurality of powered devices, there exists a physical layer. The physical layer includes an inline power control signal source. The inline power control signal designates when to apply power to a port when there is no power applied to the port and when to remove power from the port when there is power applied to the port.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated into and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate one or more exemplary embodiments of the present invention and, together with the detailed description, serve to explain the principles and exemplary implementations of the invention.

[0006] In the drawings:

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a network power system having power source equipment, a plurality of powered devices, and a plurality of corresponding transmission media; and

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of a physical layer according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0007] Various exemplary embodiments of the present invention are described herein in the context of inline power control from a physical layer. Those of ordinary skill in the art will realize that the following detailed description of the present invention is illustrative only and is not intended to be in any way limiting. Other embodiments of the present invention will readily suggest themselves to such skilled persons having the benefit of this disclosure. Reference will now be made in detail to exemplary implementations of the present invention as illustrated in the accompanying drawings. The same reference indicators will be used throughout the drawings and the following detailed descriptions to refer to the same or like parts.

[0008] In the interest of clarity, not all of the routine features of the exemplary implementations described herein are shown and described. It will of course, be appreciated that in the development of any such actual implementation, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made in order to achieve the specific goals of the developer, such as compliance with application- and business-related constraints, and that these specific goals will vary from one implementation to another and from one developer to another. Moreover, it will be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time-consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking of engineering for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit of this disclosure.

[0009] In the context of the present invention, the term "network" includes local-area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs), the Internet, cable television systems, telephone systems, wireless telecommunications systems, fiber optic networks, ATM networks, frame relay

networks, satellite communications systems, and the like. Such networks are well known in the art and consequently are not further described herein.

[0010] Turning now to FIG. 2, a block diagram of a physical layer (PHY) 18 according to the present invention is shown. The block diagram has been simplified for greater clarity. Although not shown in FIG. 1, for each port of the power source equipment 12 and for each of the plurality of powered devices 14A-N there exists a physical layer 18. Various aspects of the physical layer are defined by an IEEE standard that is known as the IEEE 802.3 standard. The pertinent aspects of the IEEE 802.3 standard are well known to those of ordinary skill in the art and will not be presented in detail herein. IEEE standard power described above is a new portion of the larger IEEE 802.3 standard. The IEEE 802.3 standard does not exclude the addition of functions to the physical layer 18. Nevertheless, there is currently no direct requirement by IEEE standard power of the physical layer 18. Given the open standard and with respect to power source equipment, not all physical layers are entirely compatible with one another from device to device and from manufacturer to manufacturer. Generally, the physical layer 18 consists of a physical coding sublayer (PCS), a physical medium attachment (PMA), and optionally a physical medium dependent (PMD) sublayer. The physical layer 18 serves as a bridge between the MDI of the link and a media independent interface (MII) or a gigabit media independent interface (GMII), as the case may be, of the power source equipment 12 or the powered device 14A-N. The MII/GMII is connected to various components including a media access control (MAC) and a station management component. The station management component provides management data input/output (MDIO) and a management data clock (MDC) to the physical layer 18.

[0011] During data communication, a series of output data signals are generated and a series of input data signals are received. The signals may be simultaneous or alternating. From the perspective of the power source equipment 12 of FIG. 1, an output data signal is generated by the physical layer 18 of the power source equipment 12 for transmission to the physical layer of the powered device connected to the particular port. For example, the powered device might be the first powered device 14A that is connected to the power source equipment 12 by the first transmission media 16A of FIG. 1. An input data signal that is generated by the physical layer 18 of the powered device connected to the port is received by the power source equipment 12 and passed to the physical layer 18 of the power source equipment 12. From the perspective of the powered devices 14A-N, the roles are substantially reversed for input and output data communications.

[0012] In terms of inline power schemes, the power source equipment 12 of FIG. 1 performs many functions which may include searching the link for a powered device, supplying power to the link only if a powered device is detected, monitoring the power on the link, and removing power from the link when the powered device is disconnected.

[0013] Under IEEE standard power, the inline power over the link may include more than one power level. The power level supplied by the power source equipment 12 of FIG. 1 may depend in part on which classification of device the powered device is according to IEEE standard power. IEEE standard power has a number of power classes while Cisco legacy power

does not. At this time, the classification of the powered devices is not strictly necessary. The option is left open for the future.

[0014] Under any of the inline power schemes, what will be referred to as an inline power control signal is composed at some instant within the power source equipment 12 of FIG. 1. A different signal is composed for each of the plurality of ports. Although the singular form of the word signal is used in describing the inline power control signal, it is possible that multiple signals may be used instead of just one. This signal may take many forms, but it is the essence of the many functions performed by the power source equipment 12, that is, apply power to the port when there is no power or remove power from the port when there is power. There would be benefits to having the physical layer 18 be the source of the inline power control signal. For example, in one embodiment a single pin could be the external output source of the signal. Depending on the circumstances, this signal might be used directly or it might require further signal processing external to the physical layer 18. Since the powered devices 14A-N of FIG. 1 are not supplying power, there is no comparable inline power control signal from the physical layer 18 of the powered devices 14A-N. This does not mean that the same physical layer is barred from use in both the power source equipment 12 and the powered devices 14A-N. It just means that in the powered devices 14A-N, the inline power control signal capability would remain unexploited at this time. A unified source of the inline power control signal would enable enhanced inline power scheme implementation.

[0015] While embodiments and applications of this invention have been shown and described, it would be apparent to those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that

many more modifications than mentioned above are possible without departing from the inventive concepts herein. The invention, therefore, is not to be restricted except in the spirit of the appended claims.